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Message Text

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62-60
ACTION H-02

INFO OCT-01 SSO-00 NEA-09 ISO-00 RSC-01 /013 W
---------- 072748
R 171747Z JAN 75
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2403
INFO USINFO WASHDC
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

UNCLAS BEIRUT 0775

EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, XF, LE, US OREP (PERCY, CHARLES H)
SUBJECT: BEIRUT PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT BY SENATOR PERCY

1. SENATOR PERCY HAS REQUESTED THAT THE TEXT OF HIS PRESS CONFERENCE OPENING STATEMENT JANUARY 17 IN BEIRUT BE TRANSMITTED BY THE FASTEST MEANS POSSIBLE TO TOM FLAHERTY, OFFICE OF SENATOR PERCY, U.S. SENATE. FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT AS TRANSCRIBED FROM A TAPE OF THE SENATOR'S PRESS CONFERENCE:

2. MY VISIT TO LEBANON HAS BEEN BRIEF BUT VERY INFORMATIVE. AT A 2 1/2-HOUR MEETING AND AT LUNCHEON TODAY WITH PRESIDENT FRANGIEH AND IN MEETINGS WITH PRIME MINISTER AS-SOLH, FOREIGN MINISTER TAQLA, AND OTHER LEBANESE LEADERS, I HAVE BEEN DEEPLY IMPRESSED BY THE WARMTH WITH WHICH I HAVE BEEN RECEIVED AND THE FRANKNESS, SINCERITY AND UTTER CANDOR OF OUR CONVERSATIONS. I HAVE BEEN MOVED BY THE CONCERN SHOWN BY LEBANON'S LEADERS FOR THE FUTURE OF THEIR OWN PEOPLE, FOR THE PALESTINIANS SHO ARE HERE IN THEIR MIDST, AND FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JUST AND LASTING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

3. HERE IN LEBANON CONCERN IS FOCUSED PARTICULARLY ON THE VICTIMS OF THE CURRENT HOSTILITIES ALONG LEBANON'S BORDERS, AND THE FUTURE OF THOSE BORDER AREAS. AMBASSADOR GODLEY AND I, IN OUR VISITS TO-DAY, HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ASSURE PRESIDENT FRANGIEH AND THE OTHER LEBANESE LEADERS TO WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN OF AMERICA'S CONTI-
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NUING CONCERN FOR AND COMMITMENT TO LEBANON'S SOVEREIGNTY AND ITS

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TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. CERTAINLY, WITHOUT ANY HESITATION, ON BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENT, THE VICE-PRESIDENT, AND THE SECRETARY OF STATE, I HAVE INDICATED THAT THE MIDEAST, INSOFAR AS FOREIGN AFFAIRS IS CONCERNED, HAS BEEN MOVED UP TO ABSOLUTE TOP PRIORITY AND IS RECEIVING THE TOP ATTENTION OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND CERTAINLY THE UNTIRING, UNCEASING AND VERY SKILLFUL EFFORTS OF SECRETARY KISSINGER.

4. AS IN THE OTHER MIDDLE EASTERN CAPITALS I HAVE VISITED IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS, I HAVE FOUND A GREAT SENSE OF URGENCY. THE LEADERS WITH WHOM I HAVE SPOKEN FEAR THAT TIME IS RUNNING OUT AND THAT A NEGOTIATING BREAKTHROUGH IS URGENTLY NEEDED IF AN EVENTUAL FIFTH ROUND OF MIDDLE EASTERN FIGHTING IS TO BE AVERTED. THESE LEADERS AGREE THAT ANOTHER WAR WOULD BE DEVASTATING TO THE COUNTRIES INVOLVED, WOULD SEVERELY DAMAGE THE WORLD ECONOMY, AND MIGHT EXPAND BEYOND THE AREAS IMMEDIATELY CONCERNED.

5. I HAVE NO DISAGREEMENT WITH THESE ASSESSMENTS OF WHY ANOTHER MIDDLE EAST WAR MUST BE AVOIDED, AND WHY A SETTLEMENT SATISFACTORY TO ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE MIDDLE EAST MUST BE NEGOTIATED. I HAVE HOWEVER EXPRESSED MY OWN DEEP CONVICTION THAT IN ANY JUST AND LASTING PEACE THE RIGHT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL--AND ALL OTHER STATES AND ALL OTHER PEOPLES IN THE AREA--TO A SECURE EXISTENCE MUST BE ASSURED AND THAT THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE MUST BE ATTAINED. I HAVE ENCOUNTERED NO BASIC DISAGREEMENT WITH THESE CONCEPTS IN THE ARAB CAPITALS I HAVE VISITED, AND I INTEND TO CONVEY THIS MESSAGE TO THE LEADERS OF ISRAEL ON MY FORTHCOMING VISIT THERE AND CERTAINLY I WILL REPORT BACK TO THE CONGRESS AND TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO THAT EFFECT.

6. THROUGHOUT MY MIDDLE EASTERN ITINERARY I AM SEEKING TO CONVEY TO ALL PARTIES THEDEEP COMMITMENT TO A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT WHICH THE LEADERSHIP OF MY COUNTRY SHARES WITH THEM. PRESIDENT FORD, VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER, AND SECRETARY KISSINGER ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH THIS PROBLEM.

7. I WOULD LIKE TO CONCLUDE THIS STATEMENT ON A PERSONAL NOTE. I HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THE LONG HISTORY OF RELATIONSHIPS, PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION, BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND
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LEBANON. AMERICANS OF LEBANESE ORIGIN AND AMERICANS WHO HAVE LIVED AND WORKED IN LEBANON HAVE OFTEN SPOKEN TO ME OF THIS OUTSTANDING RECORD OF LONG AND FREINDLY ASSOCIATION. WHAT HAS MOVED ME ON THIS VISIT IS THE DISCOVERY THAT THE PEOPLE LIVING IN LEBANON CHERISH OUR RELATIONSHIP JUST AS DO THEIR FRIENDS AND RELATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES.

8. IT WAS A PARTICULAR PLEASE FOR ME TO HAVE DINNER WITH AND

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ALSO TO VISIT WITH IN HIS OFFICE AND ON HIS CAMPUS MY OLD FRIEND
OF A QUARTER OF A CENTURY, DR. CHARLES MALIK, AND THEN TO GO
WITH HIM TO MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME PRESIDENT KIRKWOOD AND
TO TALK WITH THEM ABOUT THE FUTURE AND THE PROBLEMS OF THE
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT.

9.I WISH TO TELLY MY LEBANESE HOSTS THAT I BELIEVE THE GRAVE AREA
PROBLEMS WHICH NOW PREOCCUPY US ALL WILL BE RESOLVED AND
THAT THE HISTORIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES WILL ENDURE
LONG AFTER THESE PRESENT TRAGIC PROBLEMS ARE BEHIND US. AND
CERTAINLY I'M RECONFIRMED IN MY IMPRESSIONS THAT NO
COUNTRY WOULD BENEFIT MORE FROM A SECURE AND LASTING PEACE
THAN LEBANON, WHICH, WITHOUT MAJOR MILITARY FORCES OF ITS
OWN, HAS HAD TO BEAR THE BRUNT, DAY BY DAY AT SUCH A
TREMENDOUS COST, OF THIS CONTINUING CONFLICT.
GODLEY

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